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A

LETTER to a FRIEND

I N

I T A L Y.

K

A N D

VERSES occasioned on Reading MONTFAUCON.

fic fortis Etruria crevit;
Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.

VIRG. Georg. ii.



L O N D O N.

Printed for R. BALDWIN at the Rose in *Pater-noster-row*;

MDCCLV.

LETTER OF A FRIEND

STANLEY

Wishes occasioned on Reading Montpelier

For the first time
in the history of the
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A R G U M E N T

LETTER

TO A

FRIEND

at FLORENCE

A R G U M E N T.

Address to—Fesolé enlarged by Sylla, Augustus, Antony, and Lepidus; destroyed by Tottilas; rebuilt by Charlemagne. Tuscan Astronomers. Danté and Boccaccio born near the Banks of Arno. Italian Wines. Slavery, Superstition. Arts and Sciences. Seasons. Buildings. Architecture. History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts at Rome. Liberty proclaimed to the assembled States of Greece at the Isthmian Games by T. Quintius. The taking of Syracuse by Marcellus. Statues brought thence to Rome. The taking of Corinth by Mummius. Statuary and Painting introduced at Rome. A Taste for those Arts begins to be cultivated. The chief antique Statues mentioned. Architecture. The Pantheon. Tombs of Raphaël, and H. Caracci. Temples of Faustina and Janus. The Mausoleum of Augustus. The Moles Hadriani. The Baths of Dioclesian. The Basilicæ of Antonine. Vespasian's Amphitheatre. The Circus Maximus. Obelisks. Trajan's and Antonine's Pillars. The Duilian Pillar. The triumphal Arches of Drusus, Germanicus, and Constantine. Mints and Medals. The Riches of antient Rome accounted for. Her Fall, and the Causes of it. The Invasion of the Goths, Vandals, Huns, Franks, and Lombards. Period of Barbarism, Dulness, and Ignorance. Revival of Poetry in Provence. Petrarch, Boiardo, Tasso, Ariosto. The Revival of Learning under the Medicis. The taking of Constantinople. The Pontificate of Leo X. Castalio, Sannazarius, Vida, Fracastorius, Bembo, Flaminio, and Naugerius. Painting restored. Raphaël, Romano, Corregio, Paul Veronese, Caracci's, Titian, Guido. Conclusion. Virgil's Tomb and Sannazarius's; Vesuvius, Sibyll's Grott.

A

LETTER to a FRIEND, *etc.*

O THOU! whom *Italy's* fair Arts have borne
 Far from thy native Soil, and now detain
 In pleasing Bands, wrapt in *Florentia's* Breast:
 Say can those Climes such winning Charms display,
 As not to let one Wish repass the *Alps*,
 One Thought revisit thy *Britannia's* Plains?
 Dwells such Delight in all the Tract around
 The lofty Top of Parent *Fesolè*?
 Whose Walls, by *Sylla* and *Triumvirs* grac'd,
 A *Goth* destroy'd them, and a *Frank* restor'd.
 What though the *Tuscan* Artist there can boast
 A clearer Sky through optick Tubes beheld;
 Though *Arno's* lucid Streams her Valleys lave,
 Whose Waters slak'd the Thirst of mighty Bards,
 Of *Danté* and *Boccacio* deathless Names;

 5
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 15
 What

What though her Presses run with richest Juice,
 Pour'd from each flow'ry Dale, and Vine-clad Hill ;
 Yet Liberty thou seek'st, to grace the Scene,
 To bid the finish'd Prospect smile around :
 Yet Superstition's Clouds you'd chace away, 20
 And burst the Chain that holds the servile Throng.

But yet I own *Italia's* Fields possess
 A strong Circean Charm, a magic Force,
 That brings a sweet *Nepenthé* on the Soul,
 A fond Oblivion of all former Tyes: 25
 Where Parent, Country, Mistress, Friend is lost.
 Nor is this strange; for here the softer Arts
 Combin'd unite their Strength; the Graces here
 Knit Hands, and join the Dance; a second Spring
 Puts forth the Bud; a second Summer warms, 30
 And yellow Autumn twice unloads her Fruits;
 So lavish is the Bosom of the Soil.
 Then to behold the proud, aspiring Dome,
 Swell'd by *Fontana's* Skill; the lofty Arch

Sprung by *Palladian* Hands; the Column rais'd
 By Arts *Vitruvian*; how the just Sublime,
 The great Idea lifts and fills the Mind!

35

Ye vulgar Herd! contracted, abject Souls!
 Whose narrow Thought, or coarse perceptive Pow'rs,
 These full and fair Proportions ne'er affect,
 Th' harmonious Concord of concentrating Lines;
 What Joys, what Feelings, to your Breasts are lost!
 What Darkness must surround the Cells of Thought!
 Where never glows Imagination's Warmth,
 And Fancy's darting Lightnings never play.

40

To you the Sciences improv'd by *Rome*,
 (When flush'd with Conquests, and with Arts, from *Greece*
 She came triumphant, and aloud proclaim'd,
 At the throng'd *Isthmian* Goal, to all her States,
 And Kings assembled, LIBERTY RESTOR'D.)

50

To you the *Latian* philosophic Lore,
 The Sage's Moral, and the Poet's Song,
 The Voice, which oft the noisy *Forum* fill'd,

The

The Senate aw'd, and rul'd the Populace,
 The Pen, which all her Victories enroll'd, 55
 And to Eternity consign'd her Fame,
 Delights how exquisite!—to you debarr'd.
 The Page, the Stone, the Canvass, and the Coin,
 Her Buildings, Statues, Paintings, where each Art
 By slow Degrees, and long laborious Toil, 60
 In Nature's Steps had closely travell'd on,
 And her Designs to full Perfection brought,
 Had now been lost, and fruitlessly deplor'd:
 But some there were of more exalted Mold,
 Of Thought more liberal, Genius more enlarg'd, 65
 And finer Taste; who form'd in Nature's School,
 Snatch'd from the Jaws of all devouring Time,
 Or wasteful Fire, or pestilential War,
 Of *Papal* Superstition, *Gothic* Rage,
 The dear Remains of ev'ry shipwreck'd Art: 70
 Rescu'd with pious Zeal from Gulphs like those
 Each precious Fragment, and with Care preserv'd
 The fainted Relicks—When her Gates unhing'd,

And *Syracusa's* batter'd Walls receiv'd
 The great *Marcellus*, and the rushing Tide 75
 Of *Roman* Legions shouting Victory :
 Her Wealth, and all her Treasures, wide display'd,
 For Use, or Ornament, or Pride design'd,
 The happy Works of Art in peaceful Days,
 Conquer'd the Victor — There *Praxiteles*, 80
 And *Phidias* stood confest, a *Polyclete*,
 A *Myro* rose in animated Stone.
 There *Mentor*, who to ductile Gold bestow'd
 Worth not it's own, in lasting Records shone,
 The Goblet high-emboss'd, the massy Cup 85
 Wrought rich with Sculpture, and th' historic Vase
 Surcharg'd with Heroes on it's figur'd Sides :
 The Fresco there, by *Zeuxis'* Hand inform'd,
 Breath'd Warmth and Life ; the rival Curtain spoke
 Thy Fame, *Parrhasius* ! by it's easy Fall, 90
 And Folds inimitable ; Drapery !
 Worthy to grace thy own *Diana's* Shrine :
 The finer Line, the softer Style of *Rhodes*
 B Mark'd

Mark'd her *Protogenes* ; whose Pencil's Fame,
 And Skill in graphic Lore, his Townsmen fav'd 95
 From the dread City-taking *Greek Demetrius*,
 Who warr'd with Men, not Arts : The Charms of *Co*,
 All in one *Venus* by *Apelles* group'd,
 United rush upon *Marcellus*' Eye,
 And captivate his Mind ; the *Roman* turn'd 100
 Apostate to the *Grecian* Arts, and led them back
 To *Rome* triumphant—there to fix, and seize
 The Empire of the World, to civilize
 A rude, unpolish'd Nation, great in Arms.
 Thee, fam'd *Marcellus* ! *Mummius* imitates ; 105
 And with the Spoils of rifled *Gorinth* fills
 The vast *Basilicæ*, Vases, Statues, Urns,
 And her wrought *Brass* attract the wondring Crowd.
 The haughty *Roman* long inur'd to War,
 To tedious Marching, Sieges, Fights, and Camps, 110
 Puts off the Helmet ; nor unwilling quits
 The Shield and Spear ; nor blushes to behold
 Less dreaded Implements succeed—Those Hands
 4 Which

Which bore the Pike, the *Vallum**, and the Sword,
 The Compass, Pencil, and the Chiffel seize. 115
 A new Ambition rises; Schools are form'd;
 And the hewn Marbles echoe all around
 Th' *Æmilian Square*. One bids the flowing Curls
 In waving Ringlets negligently loose
 Hang amiable; another forms the Limbs 120
 To Geometric Scale, and just Proportion,
 Religiously exact; a thousand Statues
 Start into Life; see! there the writhing Snakes
 Twist round *Laocoon*, the Holy Priest
 Raves with Excess of Pain; what Muscles brace 125
 Yon Chest *Herculean*? such as when he flew
Nemæa's Lion, or the Mountain Boar.
 There brawny *Dares* and the tough *Entellus*
 Wield the crude *Cestus*, and to all around
 Naked Festivity of Limbs unfold 130
 In active Beauty: *Cleopatra* smiles
 Proud e'en in Death, in all its Horrors fair:

* Fert vallum et arma miles. HOR.

The Asf insatiate riots in her Breast
 Luxuriant, vibrating his forky Tongue ;
Narcissus pines in Stone ; and *Venus* turns 135
 Unwillingly averse to hide her Charms.
 See good *Aurelius* yet presides in *Rome*.
Apollo's beardless Beauty, perfect Form,
 With Grace and Gesture inexpressible,
 And Attitude divine attracts the Eye. 140
 How dyes *Meleager* ? What godlike Hand
 Inform'd *Antinous* ! Here the Sculptor's Art
 Plays with our Passions, and commands at Will.
 The dying Gladiator asks a Sigh.

Here Palaces and Temples rise — the Fane, 145
 By great *Agrippa* built to all the Gods,
 Rears her proud Head, and swells her ample Dome :
 Where *Raphaël's* and *Caracci's* kindred Urns
 Demand a Tear. *Faustina's* sacred Walls
 Succeed, and double-headed *Janus' Gates* : 150
 The vast *Augustan Mausoleum* stands,

The *Hadrian Moles*, *Dioclesian Baths*
 And *Antonine's* immense *Basilicæ* :
Vespasian's awful *Amphitheatre*,
 And the wide Plains included in the *Cirque*. 155
 These were the Glories of *eternal Rome*,
 These still survive her Fall, the Monuments
 To future Times of her Magnificence,
 Her Wealth, her Grandeur, and Imperial Rule,
 Of Victory in Arts as well as Arms. 160
 Huge *Obelisks* in *Ægypt's* Quarries hewn,
 Dragg'd from the *Nile*, and wafted cross the Main,
 Their Sides with sundry Characters engrav'd
 Of mystic Meaning, *hieroglyphic* Lore,
 Lift their tall Heads, and shoot into the Skies : 165
 Two Pillars higher than the rest are rais'd,
 To godlike *Trajan*, and wife *Antonine* ;
 A third the fam'd *Duilian Rostra* grace.
 There *Arches* proudly bending bear the Spoils
 Of Cities sack'd and mighty Nations thrall'd. 170
 This speaks the Triumphs, which young *Drusus* earn'd,

For

For early Virtue fam'd, too soon cut off
 When Life began to bloom ; the Sculpture shews
 The *Parthian* flying with his broken Bow ;
 Another holds the Trophies of *Germanicus*,
 Alike in Fame and Fate, by *Piso* slain
 In Glory's full Career : A third sustains
 Triumphant *Constantine*, *Maxentius*' Fall,
 And Hosts confounded at the *Milvian Bridge*.

Others a *Mint* establish — strike the Coin ;
 Some in *Corinthian* Copper, some in Gold,
 In Silver, or in Brass: the *Medal* swells
 In bold Relief, and rises into Life,
 Faithful to future Times their Fame conveys,
 And in *eternal* Characters records
 The glorious Actions of the Good and Great ;
 An History engrav'd, an *Annal* stamp'd,
 Which neither Moth, nor Rust, nor Fire, nor Time,
 Nor Envy shall destroy ; escapes alone
 Those Gulphs, where *Tacitus*, and *Livy* sunk.

Nor wonder *Rome* possess'd these Works of Art
 In Affluence amazing, when she held
 The Empire of the World, and could command
 The Fortunes, Persons, and the Lives of all :
 Then Rapine stalk'd abroad, and rifled Provinces, 195
 And starving Nations wept their plunder'd Wealth :
Rome sent her curs'd *Proconsul* Plagues around,
 And let a *Verres* loose to scourge Mankind.

At length, like some huge Tow'r, which long had stood
 The Winds and Storms, and batt'ring Engines rage, 200
 Each covert Sap, or open Form of Siege ;
 At last begirt without by hostile Troops,
 Whether in Tortoise, Wedge, or circling Moon ;
 Betray'd within by lurking Treachery ;
 Push'd ev'ry Way, and press'd with mighty Force 205
 Of Hosts combin'd, it shakes, it reels, it falls,
 And spreads wide Ruin on the Plains beneath :
 So falls Imperial *Rome*—her Luxury,
 Her Sloth, and e'en the Arts by which she rose ;

Her

Her civil Rage, and wide extended Rule, 210
 The slacken'd Reins of Empire, Cruelty,
 Oppression, Rapine, Plunder through the Provinces,
 Op'd wide her Gates, and courted in the Foe.
 Thither the *Goth*, the *Vandal*, and the *Hun*,
 The *Franc*, and *Lombard*, hasted to divide 215
 And share her Spoils, to drive the *Muses* thence,
 Banish each Art and Science, and o'erwhelm
 In lazy Ignorance the sluggish World,
 In *Gothic* Dulness, and Barbarian Night.

But when to *Gallic* Plains the Nine return'd 220
 Indignant, and *Provence* sent forth her wild,
 Fond, *Legendary* Bards, a strolling Race,
 To rouse the sleeping Lyres of *Italy*;
 Then to dispel these Shades, and Northern Mists,
Boiardo, *Tasso*, *Ariosto* rose, 225
 And *Petrarch*, Father of her laurell'd Sons:
 Then thy *Florentia's Medicean* Line,
 Tho' sprung from simple Citizens, tho' born
 To labour in the Commerce of the World,

Bad *Europe's* Kings, and haughty Monarchs blush:

230

To that illustrious House, of *Tuscan* Race,

To the great *Medici*, the Sciences,

The banish'd Arts and frightened Muses Train

Repair'd for Shelter—When grim visag'd War

Led on proud *Mahomet's* barbaric Host

235

To sack *Byzantium*; at the distant View

Of waving Standards, at the hostile Sound

Of armed Hoofs, at the shrill Trumps Alarm,

The awful Genius of old *Greece*, and *Rome*

Fled trembling; and in *Cosmo's* Mansions sought

240

The wish'd *Asylum*. There *Minerva's* Sons

Driv'n from their peaceful Seats, and silent Cells,

By the rude Hand of Russian Violence,

Found in his fostering Arms a still Retreat;

Thee! *Cosmo!* thee! propitious Gods restor'd

245

Exil'd by Envy and loud Faction's Voice,

To raise thy City's, and thy Country's Fame.

E'en now, by Ignorance and Rapine join'd,

Dismantled Learning had abandon'd lain:

The long collected Lore of Ages past,

250

The treasur'd Science of unnumber'd Years,
 By martial Fury had been swept away,
 Been lost and swallow'd in the Gulphs of War,
 But for those timely Aids, that Hand you lent.
 By thee the *Grecian* Glory rose again, 255
 The *Roman* Genius at thy Call awoke,
 Burst from its Trance, and imp'd its eagle Wings.
 And after him in *Leo's* better Days,
Castalio, *Sannazar*, and *Vida*, came
Flaminius, *Bembo*, *Fracaſtor*, and thou, 260
Naugerius, glorious Band of tuneful Bards !
 Who wak'd the sounding String, reſtor'd the Fame
 Of antient Song, and bad the Hills of *Rome*
 Shake with the Pow'r of mighty Melody.
 Then *Raphael's* animated Canvaſe glow'd, 265
 And old *Romano* own'd his happier Touch :
Corregio's Pencil ſoftern'd into Life
 The blended Colours; *Paulo's* Attitudes
 The ſkill and Freedom of his Hand declar'd;
Caracci's nervous Figures ſtood confeſt; 270

While

While *Titian's* Beauties ev'ry Bosom warm'd;
 And *Guido's* graceful Air the Gazer struck.
 But whither roves the Muse—in *Latian* Plains
 O'er Hill and Dale discursive; sacred Song,
 And sportive Fancy led her on too far, 275
 Too long descriptive of those pleasing Scenes.
 But well I ween my Friend forgives her Flights,
 Forgives her Rapture, if on *Classic* Themes
 She fondly dwelling pour the lengthen'd Lay:
 Thou lov'st the Theme and Muse—the Subject thou 280
 Couldst sing more deftly and in happier Verse;
 Skill'd in the sister Arts! E'en now you tread
 The *Muses* hallow'd Ground, their Haunts frequent,
 Or on the Banks of *Tibur*, or of *Po*,
 Straying at Ease, or where the *Liris'* Stream 285
 Steals silent, or the rapid Course of *Nar*
 Sulphureous falls, or smooth *Clitumnus* rolls:
 Now pluck from *Virgil's* Tomb the Laurel wreath,
 Weep o'er the Urn of *Sannazar*, ascend the Top
 Of dread *Vesuvio*, seek the *Sibyl's* Grott, 290
 And

And pass undaunted through her gloomy Caves:
 While I, less active, breathe my native Air,
 And in my Country's Lawns, and Woodland Shades,
 Rove solitary; chaunting to each Hill, and Dale,
 That melancholy Theme, despairing Love:
Lucinda's Coldness, and her Charms my Song.

